

Gypsy 'king' Richard buys up more green belt £54,000 land grab by traveller

■ By JON AUSTIN
Political reporter

THE main spokesman for hundreds of travellers illegally camped at Crays Hill has forked out £54,000 for more green belt land.

Residents fear Richard Sheridan and three others from the Dale Farm site, are planning a new illegal camp off London Road.

Yesterday the Echo revealed the 35-year-old had become a top travellers' campaigner, fighting to keep travellers on Dale Farm and advising the Government.

However, residents believe the half-an-acre purchase, which could house as many as 40 travellers, is a bid to cash in on more development or, worse still, build new homes.

Mr Sheridan today confirmed the purchase – but said it was to graze horses.



■ Buyer – Richard Sheridan

David McPherson-Davis, Ramsden Crays Parish Council chairman, said the travellers would have paid "dearly" for such land.

He said: "I am surprised these people have any spare cash left to buy land bearing in mind most people at the site appear to be on income support.

Basildon Council has secured a High Court injunction banning Mr

Sheridan, Michael Slattery, Patrick Sheridan and Jeremy O'Brien from developing a "residential encampment" on the land.

The men gave an address in Queensway, London.

The court application stated: "Their surnames are synonymous with those of prominent traveller families presently occupying Dale Farm. Richard Sheridan is an exact match to the name of the person who tends to be the spokesperson.

"I believe the purchase is a form of land banking in the event direct action is taken by the council."

Businessman Len Gridley from Oak Road said: "This shows he is not just campaigning, he is feathering his own nest, sticking two fingers up at the village."

Campaigner Kim Gandy added: "I'd like to know where the cash comes from. We are told all the money

went into buying Dale Farm and they live simple lives, but most people couldn't afford this."

Council leader Malcolm Buckley added: "We will continue to use all powers available to protect vulnerable green belt."

The site, near Pond Farm, made headlines last year when land agent Property-Spy split it into plots for sale. Villagers pooled £320,000 to buy the 17-acre site, but the sale collapsed.

A spokesman for PropertySpy, which has always maintained it would not sell to illegal developers, said: "We were provided with a central London address for service of documents for the buyers and had no indications the buyers were anything other than private investment purchasers."